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ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
P 300337Z MAR 06  
FM AMEMBASSY DILI  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2367  
INFO RHEHAAA/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC  
RUCNARF/ASEAN REGIONAL FORUM COLLECTIVE  
RHHMHAA/COMPACFLT PEARL HARBOR HI  
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA PRIORITY 0386  
RUEHLI/AMEMBASSY LISBON PRIORITY 0313  
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 0172  
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 0325  
RUEHWL/AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON PRIORITY 0257  
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 0195  
RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI  
RUEHDT/AMEMBASSY DILI 1687

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 DILI 000147

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

DEPT FOR EAP/MTS  
NSC FOR HOLLY MORROW

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [TT](#)  
SUBJECT: FOREIGN MINISTER BRIEFS DIPLOMATIC CORPS ON LOCAL TENSIONS

REF: Dili 135

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1. (SBU) Summary: On 29 March, Foreign Minister Jose Ramos Horta briefed the diplomatic corps on recent events in Dili, emphasizing that press reports of riots and military strife are exaggerated and that recent disturbances have been neither politically or ethnically motivated nor fatal. Rather, he suggested, vandals and petty criminals are taking advantage of elevated tensions and police are effectively controlling the situation. Police Chief Paulo Martins summarized recent incidents in the Dili area. Ramos Horta also opined that serious re-thinking of the armed forces' (F-FDTL) structure and mission is in order, as the Government considers its response to President Xanana Gusmao's concerns about 591 soldiers recently dismissed from service. End summary.

2. (SBU) On 29 March, Foreign Minister Jose Ramos Horta convoked the diplomatic corps to brief us on recent events related to striking F-FDTL members. Ramos Horta chided the local and international press for exaggerated and inaccurate reporting suggesting rioting or military strife is occurring in East Timor. Since President Kay Rala Xanana Gusmao's 23 March speech criticizing the dismissal of 591 striking soldiers, there have been several minor incidents in Dili involving martial arts group (i.e., gang) members and others individuals engaged in vandalism, harassment, and other disturbances. The Foreign Minister said there have been no deaths in these incidents, only two members of the 591 strikers have been implicated in these incidents, political parties have behaved well and remained uninvolved, all the incidents were controlled or dissipated when police arrived, and ethnic differences were not a factor. Ramos Horta compared the situation to a recent tsunami scare in which a small group of looters started rumors of trouble so locals would abandon their houses and quickly sell their property for less than its value. Responding to concerns raised by the diplomats present, the Minister asked Police Chief Paulo Fatima Martins, also present, to begin daily press briefings to provide the public and diplomatic community with current, accurate updates and rumor control in verbal and written form.

3. (U) Police Chief Martins summarized events following the

President's 23 March speech:

-- 24 March. 2330 hours. A group attacked a vendor, stealing a table, a chair, and a tin roof.

-- 25 March. 2200 hours. In Taci Tolu, two groups armed with knives fought, four were arrested, and doors and windows of five houses were damaged. One of those arrested was a former F-FDTL soldier. 2230 hours. In Bairo Pite four people were caught robbing a house and windows and doors were damaged. In Mandiwana, a family was attacked in their house. 16 houses were vandalized.

-- 26 March. 2230 hours. In Mandiwana, community members were fighting. The police fired four shots in the air and the groups dispersed.

-- 27 March. Four houses were vandalized including one belonging to the deputy director of the police academy. A minibus was also attacked.

-- 28 March. 1700 hours. Julio Guterres attacked Anita Ximenes in what was possibly a domestic dispute. Ximenes sought police assistance. When the officer arrived, he fired a shot and either missed or had fired just as a warning. Guterres knifed the officer four times in the abdomen, took the officer's pistol, and fled. The officer is now in the hospital. 2300 hours. In Taci Tolu several people burned tires and rubbish. Police put out the fires. As the crowd dispersed and police were leaving, someone threw a homemade incendiary. There were no injuries.

14. (SBU) Ramos Horta said on 30 March he would meet with the President and Prime Minister to discuss the situation and perhaps suggest solutions for the 591 strikers and the F-FDTL. The Foreign Minister also said on 31 March he would be in Baucau (East Timor's second major city) to consult with Bishop Nascimento and the F-FDTL. Ramos Horta shared his current

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thinking regarding F-FDTL force structure and mission. He said the current two battalions, designed primarily to provide employment and buy time for international relief following a hypothetical and highly unlikely invasion, might need serious revision. He suggested a first battalion should be English-speaking, well educated (with secondary school completion required for entry and eventually a college degree required), and focused primarily on contributing to international peacekeeping operations (PKO). A second battalion, Ramos Horta said, would be trained for civil-military affairs including engineering rural roads, schools, housing projects, and health facilities, and providing disaster relief.  
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